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An Impartial Account of BOOKS in several Languages,

And of the *State of Learning in Europe:*

ALSO

Of the STAGE, New OPERAS, PLAYS and ORATORIOS.

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PREFACE.

WITH the warmeſt ſentiments of gratitude to an indulgent Public, it might not be deemed preſumption, to commence our Seventy-ſixth Volume with the pleaſing recapitulation of exertions, that have obtained extenſive approbation, for a ſeries of near forty years. But, inſtead of the effuſions of a ſatisfaction, neither unnatural, perhaps, nor unbecoming, we would rather beg leave to repeat our ſincere aſſurances, that we ſhall continue to collect, with zeal and aſſiduity, whatever has the beſt tendency to diſſeminate KNOWLEDGE, and be productive of PLEASURE.

Some circumſtances, however, have diſtinguiſhed the preceding year, which we may be allowed to ſubmit, with reſpectful deference, to the recollection of our Readers. We have enriched our Miſcellany with a ſucceſſion of connected Extracts from the laſt intereſting Voyage of the late Captain Cook. In theſe are copious deſcriptions of the new-diſcovered Iſlands; many ſingular appearances in Natural Hiſtory; curious details of ſavage manners, in various approaches from ſcarce animated life to wonderful civilization; with other particulars equally inſtructive and entertaining. Each extract has been embelliſhed with Heads of the Natives, or ſome curious and picturesque repreſentation, engraved by the beſt Artiſts, from the original plates, publiſhed by order of the Lords of the Admiralty; and the whole has been farther illuſtrated, in our laſt Supplement, by a whole Sheet Chart of the North Weſt Coaſt of America, including part of the oppoſite Continent of Aſia.

Nor has that great diſcovery, known by the name of Aëroſtation, eſcaped our attentive reſearches. Excurſions of human beings through tracts of air, and even from country to country acroſs the ſea, which, very recently, would have been regarded as the reveries of ingenious but viſionary theoriſts, have, at laſt, been undertaken and achieved. The multitude, ignorant of the latent powers and properties of Nature, read the firſt accounts with incredulity,

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and beheld the ſublime phenomenon itſelf with aſtoniſhment. In ſome places abroad, the ignorant peaſantry have even realized the deſcription of Ovid:

> Hos aliquis, tremulâ dum captat arundine piſces,
> Aut paſtor baculo, ſtivâve innixus arator,
> Vidit, & obſtupuit, quique æthera carpere poſſent,
> Credidit eſſe Deos ———

'They proſtrated themſelves, in adoration of an object they deemed divine.'—The Philoſopher, engaged in the ſtudy of the human mind, in various ſituations, from the loweſt ſtate of degradation, to the moſt perfect advances in knowledge, may ſmile, perhaps, at ſuch an incident as this. In every new appearance of Nature, he is anxious to explore the ſecret cauſe. In our Magaine for January 1784, we entered into a full diſcuſſion of the philoſophical principles of this new ſcience. What benefits may hereafter reſult to mankind from the diſcovery, is not an object of enquiry here: but we have given, from time to time, a complete Hiſtory of the principal Experiments; as a ſubject which has engaged the attention of many, whether as ſcientific enquirers into the laws of the creation, or as the lovers merely of novelty and amuſement.

The Admirers of Biography we refer to an Alphabetical Liſt, in our laſt Supplement, of near Five Hundred Heads and Lives of diſtinguiſhed Perſons, which have been given in the courſe of publication. With what attention this department of our work has been conducted, may appear (to mention one or two inſtances) from the very accurate information we procured of a late celebrated Author, in our Magazine for Auguſt laſt; and from the Memoirs of the Stadtholders of the United Provinces, with a fine Head of the preſent Prince of Orange, in our ſubſequent number for September.

Our beſt thanks are due to ſome obliging Correſpondents, for their intereſting communications, the continuance of which we reſpectfully ſolicit.